American German Language

Standard American German is a mix of historical words, English loan words, and new words which connect together a standard version of the German language used by the non-Amish or Mennonite descendants of the original pre-20th century German immigrants in the United States.

Standard American German	
Language family	Indo-European ▪ Germanic ▪ West Germanic ▪ Irminones ▪ German ▪ American German ▪ **Standard American German**
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	–

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History

Ever since the first German ethnic families came to the United States and were among the first settlers of Jamestown, Virginia, in 1608,[1] the German language, dialects, and traditions of Germany have ever since played a role in the social identity of many German-Americans and of modern European Germans.[2] By 1910, an accounted 554 newspaper issues were being printed in the standard German language throughout the United States as well as a number of schools which taught in German with class-time set aside for English learning.

Birth of anti-German thought

During the early 20th century, as the British English-American ethnic group sought the upper hand in power and influence through politics and through the funded formation of the Ku Klux Klan, a rise in anti-immigrant and distrust aimed at German-Americans was enforced. Through advertising and Government funded marketing, German-Americans / the "Dutchman" and the German language quickly became distrusted, and as such, anyone, regardless of age who was fluent in the language, who was associated with, or who practiced traditions viewed as foreign of any type was subject to a number of harassments, distrust, and on a few occasions, death.

One such death was of Robert Prager, a German seeking naturalization in St. Louis, Missouri who was accused on the night of April 14, 1914, of being a German spy by a mob of 300 "men and boys"[3] after he had allegedly shared words at a socialist meeting earlier that evening. After being stripped of his clothes, he was led down Main Street with a rope tied around his neck, was forced to walk the route with shattered glass bottles being thrown down in his walking path, was forced to sing at the same time patriotic songs during his walk, and was forced to kiss an American flag which had been wrapped around him. At the end of his walk to a hanging tree at the edge of town, he was lynched.[4] In an article from *The St. Louis Global-Democrat,* it was reported that multiple incidences of mobs tarring and feathering individuals had previously occurred.[3]

A pile of German Textbooks, from the Baraboo High School, burning on a street in Baraboo, Wisconsin, during an anti-German demonstration

Current standing

Per the 2011 United States Census, there are approximately 1.1 million speaker of German residing in the United States.[5] It is currently unknown how many of these speakers have families who were residing there prior to WW1, a time when migration from Germany to the United States boomed. There currently is research being headed by multiple institutions, most notedly at the University of Kansas from scholars such as William Keel, the Max-Kade Institute of German-American Studies of the University of Wisconsin–Madison[6] and George J. Metcalf from the University of Chicago.[7]

Selected greetings

Selected morning greetings

American German	European Standard German	English Translation
Guda Morcha	Guten Morgen	Good morning
Guda Morga	Guten Morgen	Good morning
Guda Marije	Guten Morgen	Good morning
Guten Morgen	Guten Morgen	Good morning

Selected midday greetings

American German	European Standard German	English Translation
Guda Dach	Guten Tag	Good day! [held as a growingly old-fashioned greeting by mainstream American]
Guda Tach	Guten Tag	Good day!
en Guda	einen Guten [Tag]	A good day [to you]!
Was ist neues/neies?	Was ist neues?	What is new?

Selected phrases

American Geman	European Standard German	English translation
Ach!	Ach!	Oh!
Geh an!	Geh weiter!	Go on!
Gug amol!	Guck mal!	Look once!; Look!
Hurry auf!	Beeil dich!	Hurry up!
Scheiße, bitte!	Komm, schon!	"Shit, please! [eyeroll]," "Oh, please!," Are you kidding me?
Sei so gut und...	[Sei so gut und...] (historic connotations)	Be so good and... ex. Be so good and help your mother set the table.
Sei artig!	Benimm dich!	Be polite/curteous!
Stell dich/di weg!	Hau ab!/Verschwinde!	Get lost! Go away!
Verdammt!	Verdammt!	Damn!
Was zur Hölle?	Was zur Hölle?	What the hell?

General American German nouns

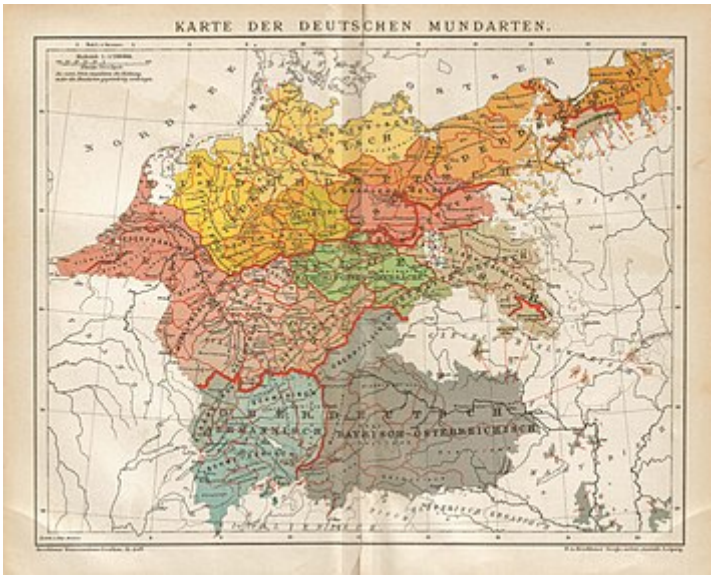
These nouns have been found in all regions of the United States and are not exclusive to any particular region. While English loanwords are found for a number of reasons including the lack of certain objects (such as *Truck)* in pre-20th century German, dialect leveling is also found throughout regions where German is still found. Though previous studies have tried to pinpoint them to specific locations such as *Stinkkatze* with Texas German dialects, further research has also found these words in use which extend beyond their originally perceived regions.[8][9][10] In reality, there are many other words which as more research is done, are to be added to this list.

American German terms (singular)	European Standard German (singular)	English translation
der Abnemmer	Fotograf (m)/ Fotografin (f)	the photographer
der Barrel, "Berl"	Faß (n)	the barrel
der Bu(a)	Junge (m)	the boy
der Bub	Junge (m)	the boy
die Car	Auto (n)	the car
der Change	Veränderung (f)	the change, switch, adjustment
der Columbine	Kolombine (m)	the columbine
die Countrykirch'	Landkirche (f)	the countryside church
der Countryweg	Landstraße (f)	the country road/ "country way"
die Crick	Flüßchen (n)	the creak/stream
der Eichhase/Eichhos'	Eichhörnchen (n)	the squirrel
der Eichkater	Eichhörnchen (n)	the squrrel
der Elevator	Hebewerk (m)	the elevator
die Eisbox	der Kühlschrank	the Refrigerator
der Grainelevator	Getreideheber (m)	the grain elevator
der Gel(e)beribe	Karotte (f)	the carrot
der Grosspapa	Grossvater (m)	the grandfather
die Klapperbox	Klavier (n)	the piano
die Farm	Bauernhof (m)	the Farm
die Farmerleute	Bauern (pl)	the farming people/family of farmers
die Fence	Zaun (m)	the fence
die Fedder	Kuli/Kugelschreiber(m)	the ballpoint pen
Früher	Frühling (m)	the spring [season]
der Heimstead	Eigenheim (n)	the homestead
das Hoch(e)deutsch	Hochdeutsch (n); Standarddeutsch (n)	the high German / standard German language
die Kiihler/Kühler	Kühlschrank (m)	the refrigerator
der Korn	Mais (m)	the corn
der Knecht	Hausdiener (m)	the male-servant, the houseboy
das Luftschiff/Luftschipp	Flugzeug (n)	the airship: airplane
die Microwave	Mikrowelle (f)	the microwave
das Piktur	Bild (n)	the picture
das Pocketbuch	Handtasche (f), Geldbeutel (m)	the pocketbook
der Schulmeister die Schulmeisterin	Schulmeister (m) Schulmeisterin (f)	the head teacher
die Schulerei	Gaunerei (f), Schurkerei (f)	troublemaking, trickery, prank,

		playfulness
die Stinkkatze/Stinkkotz'/Stinkchaatz	Stinktier (n)	the skunk
der Truck	Lastwagen (m)	the truck/Pick-up/18-wheeler
der Weg, Wech	Landstraße (f), Straße (f)	the road / "the way" (dialectal)

General American German verbs

Throughout the history of the German language in the United States, through the coexistence with English, there are many loanwords which have been absorbed into the American Standard Variety of German. At the same time, there are many usages which have been preserved in American German varieties including usages from the numerous dialects of the German regions. This preservation is a common phenomenon that occurs when a language leaves its original region: While the language in the original country moves forward, words and meanings in the new region freeze and often do not change along with the mother country.



Map of sub German Dialects alongside General Dialect Regions

General American German	European Standard German	English translation
"Ich will ein Piktur abnehmen." "Ich will ein Bild abnehmen."	"Ich will ein Bild machen."	"I want to take a picture."
jemanden/etwas aufraisen	jemand/etwas aufwachsen	raise up; to raise [children, agriculture], to cultivate
"Ich ward' hier in dem Township aufgeraist."	"Ich bin hier in dem Dorf aufgewachsen."	"I was raised here in the town."
jemanden/etwas gleichen	jemanden/etwas mögen	to like, appreciate
"Ich hab' den Movie geglichen." "Ich gleich dich!"	"Ich hab den Film sehr gemocht." "Ich mag dich!"	"I liked the movie." "I like you!"
jemanden/etwas heißen	jemand/etwas nennen	to name someone
"Was hab'n sie das Kind geheißt?"	"Wie haben sie das Kind genannt?	"What have you named the child?"
jemanden/etwas pullen	jemanden/etwas ziehen	to pull [something]
"Sie pullen die Beets."	"Sie roden Rüben."	"They pull the beets up."
Zeit spenden	Zeit verbringen	to spend time [doing something]
"Wir dachten, wir könnten Zeit spenden bei deiner Grandmom."	"Wir haben uns gedacht, wir Zeit bei der Oma verbringen könnten."	"We thought we could spend time by/at Grandma's."
verzähle(n), schwätze(n), quatsche(n), plader(n), schnacken, babbel(n), rede(n)	sprechen	to speak, speaking, to converse

North Dakota German samples

The story of the generally studied North Dakota German originates in southern central Germany. The ancestors of these Germans, also known as Volga Germans, had relocated to Russia in 1763 under invitation by Catherine the Great and organized over one hundred colonies which lined the Volga River near present-day Saratov. By 1884, many of these German-Russians began their journey to present-day North Dakota, and primarily chose to settle in the south-central part of the state. Settlements, as per ethnic tradition in Russia, were often based on "common religious affiliation."[11]

German-Russian Protestants traditionally are the hegemonic group within McIntosh County and the eastern half of Logan County.[11]

German-Russian Catholics traditionally are the hegemonic group within southern Emmons County and branch into western Logan County.[11]

The dialects of these immigrants, alongside cultural differences among the sub-ethnic groups of the "Volga Germans" are today often marked by small differences in meaning, word usage, and sometimes pronunciation which reflects the original regions of Germany from where many of the individuals of this ethnic group have their origins. The dialects of southern Germany often are tied together with shared meanings, sounds, and grammars,[8] though remain distinct in syntax and grammatical pattern and often

individual word definitions. Therefore, when studying transcriptions, some varieties of North Dakota German may be understood by Pennsylvania Amish German speakers due to similarities, yet understanding is achievable from general dialect speakers or those familiar with southern German dialects. Though each respective member can establish communication with his own ethnic group's dialect or his town's dialect, neither dialect is the same.

Sample 1

> "Mir habe e grosses Haus gehat... Auf einem End war sogar en Storch, hat sein Nest gehat. Die Storche sin nett, was sie dohin meinen. Die Storche, dadraus tragen kein Babies rum. Die kommen frihjahrs [frühjahrs] zurick un Winter spenden sie in der Sid. Wo das kann sei, kennt ich gar nett sage. Sie sin halt immer Sid gange, un zum Frihjahr sin sie komme un ha'n ihre Nester ausgeputzt un ha'n wider - manche, die habe vier Junge kriegt. Dir mersten habe bloss zwei. Ich hab einmal anständig Schläge kriegt von einem Storch. Er hatte Junges, das hat wolle schnell fliege lerne un war au nett star' genug. Un er ist auf der Bode gefalle un der alte Storch hat's nett kenne nuftrage wieder ins Nest. Un er ist halt rumgewandert." - Informant 7, Recorded in April 1976[12]

Sample 2

> "Wir verzählen au' immer noch Deutsche bis jetzt, un' unsre kinder au', verzählen au' alle Deutsch. Un' ich hab' Deutsch gelernt daheim, bin Deutsch konfirmiert worden, un' zu unsrer Mutter verzähle ich auch immer noch Deutsch, aber es ist immer halber Englisch. Un' wo ich English gelernt habe, bin ich in Schul' gegange'." - 72 yr old Informant; Lehr, North Dakota, 1975

Missouri German samples

Over the years, Missouri would become a state full of German enclaves.

In 1837 along the Missouri River, School Teacher George Bayer, a German of Philadelphia, traveled to Missouri and purchased 11,000 acres of land. When the first 17 settlers arrived on the newly purchased land, what would become Hermann, Missouri, the land terrain was unexpectedly unsuitable for a town. According to local legend and what could serve as a study for anthropological researchers into the ethnic characteristics of the Low Germans and other German ethnicities, the survival of this town is credited to German ethnic characteristic of perseverance and hard work.

> "Ah... Ich heiße *[omitted]* und ich war... mein ganzes Leben war ich ein Farmer, und ich bin noch Farmer. Wir haben Rindvieh, Schweine, und ich baue Seubohne und Mais. Wir haben Hähne, En'en *[Enten]*, Truthahn, bisschen von alles - ein Esel. Ja, ich habe 1979 angefangen im Postamt - 1979 und ah, ich konnte deutsch sprechen wie die andere im Postamtplatz. Alli konnten deutsch sprechen, und es hat gut gepasst, dass ich auch deutsch sprechen konnte. Aber diese sind... Alli meine Kameraden, wo an dem Postamt waren sind jetzt tot -- außer einer: Der Carl *[omitted]*. Er lebt noch. So er ist 89. Alli anderen sind tot.' Hermann German *("Hermanndeutsch") - Male Farmer informant, McKittrick, Missouri, 2014* [13]

While Hermann German is a recognized form of German, other German settlements and German American farms where German was and is spoken can still be found to this day. [14]This form of Saxon from the dialect of the region of Hannover, Germany can still be heard in pockets surrounding St. Louis, Missouri and in other reaches of the state.[15]

Sample 2 (Conversational Saxon)

> Speaker 1: "'s freut mich doch dass wir widor zusamm'n komm'n kenn'n."
>
> Speaker 2: "Well danke schoen! Das freut mich auch! Mir sehen immor noch ziemlih gude aus!"
>
> Speaker 1: "Ja. mir sind ja schon ald obor geht amol ganz gut."
>
> Speaker 2: "Immor noch jung"
>
> Excerpt from the interview: "Mir wuess'en kein *Deitsch*" This informant quickly fixed his mistake and said "*Englisch"*. His corrected sentence in English:"We knew no English [when we went to school]."
>
> *Saxon German ("Deitsch"), two male interviewees, Perry County Lutherans, 2018*

St. Genevieve, Missouri has also been the site of massive historic immigrant in-moving. The main groups of historic mention are the French-Americans of the area and migrants from Baden-Württemberg[16]. The migrations of the latter occurred primarily in the later decades of the 19th century[17]. In recent years, the preserved alemannic dialect in the town of New Offenburg was recorded in the documentary film “New Offenburg.[17]”

Sample 3 (Conversational New Offenburg Alemannic German)

> "In de Morga, well all de do um mi... mi... mi Pecanbaum, [a Eichhos'] ist gsucht gang hette und het a Pecan gessa. Des woar boutta halb Stunde zuruck - a roder Eichhos'."
>
> *New Offenburg Alemannic German ("Dietsch") from "New Offenburg"* [17]

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